

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-10

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R 210645Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4159

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 2631

FOLLOWING TEL BOMBAY 0424 DTD 20 FEB 76 RCVD NEW DELHI
BEING REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOMBAY 0424

EO 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PINT IN

SUBJECT: GUJARAT

REF: NEW DELHI 2497

1. THE JANATA FRONT GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO HAVE GAINED SOME STRENGTH IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, AS MP JADEJA POINTED OUT, AS FOUR MORE KMLP LEGISLATORS HAVE APPARENTLY DECIDED TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT. WITH THE SEVEN FORMER KMLP MLAS WHO DECIDED A FEW DAYS AGO TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING THE FRONT, THE PATEL GOVERNMENT NOW HAS A SOMEWHAT MORE COMFORTABLE MARGIN.

2. THE EXTENT OF THE FRONT'S CURRENT STRENGTH WAS CONFIRMED WHEN CONG (R) DECIDED TO WITHDRAW ITS MOTIIN TO OUST THE SPEAKER OF THE STATE LEGISLATURE SCHEDULED FOR FEB 19. EARLIER CONG (R) HAD SEEMED QUITE CONFIDENT OF OUSTING THE FRONT WHEN THE MOTION WAS TABLED, AND INDEED, HAD BEEN SO HOPEFUL THAT IT WOULD BRING DOWN THE FRONT THAT IT HAD FORCED THE ISSUE ON FEB 12.

3. MOUNTING OPPOSITION TO SOME OF THE FRONT'S TAX PROPOSALS (ESPECIALLY ON CASH CROPS) IN THE 1976-77 BUDGET HAD POSED AN ADDITIONAL THREAT TO THE FRONT, AS SOME OF THE CONG (O) MLAS
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WERE SAID TO BE VIOLENTLY OPPOSED TO THE TAXES. BABUBHAI PATEL

REPORTEDLY AGREED TO MODIFY THE NEW PROPOSALS, THEREBY NEUTRALIZING THE OPPOSITION ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE.

4. ON THE WHOLE, IT APPEARS THAT THE FRONT HAS PERFORMED FAIRLY WELL IN THE BUDGET DEBATE AND IT MAY WELL BE ABLE TO HOLD SUFFICIENT SUPPORTERS TO PREVENT A VOTE THAT WOULD AMOUNT TO A SHOW OF NO CONFIDENCE. WE HEAR THAT BABUBHAI PATEL CHALLENGED THE CONG (R) TO FACE THE ELECTORATE IN A BY-ELECTION FOR THE THREE VACANT SEATS, WHICH MIGHT INDICATE HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE POPULARITY OF THE FRONT IN THE STATE. AS JADEJA OBSERVED, THE FRONT HAS BEEN POPULAR IN THE STATE, AND DESPITE THE POLITICAL MANEUVERINGS OF THE PAST FEW WEEKS, IT APPARENTLY CONTINUES SOME HOLD ON THE RANK AND FILE OF THE GUJARAT VOTER.

5. AS THE FRONT NOW APPEARS TO HAVE REGROUPED SUFFICIENTLY TO RETAIN ITS VOTING MARGIN, MRS GANDHI'S ONLY ALTERNATIVE MAY BE IMPOSITION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE IF SHE IS DETERMINED TO OUST THE FRONT IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

COURTNEY

UNQUOTE

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